SOUTH AFRICA.

CORRESPONDENCE

RELATING TO THE

APPEAL OF THE BOER GENERALS TO THE CIVILIZED WORLD.

No. 1.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN to GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA.

SIR, Downing Street, November 6, 1902.

SINCE the interview which you had with me at this Office on the 5th of September* an "Appeal of the Boer Generals to the Civilized World"† has been issued, many of the statements in which have, according to Press reports, been repeated and enlarged upon in the speeches delivered by yourself and General De la Rey and General De Wet during your tour on the Continent.

The Appeal, I regret to say, appears to me to convey an incorrect and exaggerated impression of the circumstances to which it refers, and, although I have no desire at this time to enter into controversy, I cannot allow it to pass altogether in silence.

In the first place I am at a loss to understand why the Appeal should open with a statement that you have not up to the present succeeded in inducing the British Government to grant further assistance to your people. It is not, indeed, the intention of His Majesty's Government to ask Parliament to authorize any addition to the free grant of £3,000,000—a grant which is itself without any precedent in the history of the world—but the promise of further assistance by way of loan on very easy terms, as provided by Article 10 of the Terms of Surrender, has never been withdrawn; and I think you will agree, on again consulting the record of our conversation, that there is nothing in the language which I then used which indicates any intention on the part of His Majesty's Government to withdraw it.

Further, the expenditure on the Burgher camps which, since the conclusion of peace, have, to a great extent, been transformed into organizations for enabling the people to return to their homes; and the cost of which has been about £200,000 a month, is being borne by His Majesty's Government and constitutes in effect a very considerable addition to the free grant.

The cost of the camps since their establishment has exceeded £3,000,000, and there is no room for reasonable doubt that they have been the means of preserving the lives of thousands of women and children and of providing the latter with a better education than they ever had the opportunity of enjoying before.

I observe that in an article signed by you in this month's "Contemporary Review," you make it a complaint that the Concentration Camps are still being maintained.

It must be self evident that on the score of expense alone it is the interest of His Majesty's Government to abolish these camps at the earliest possible moment, and it is only in the cause of humanity that they continue to maintain this costly organization.

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* *See* [Cd. 1284], September, 1902. † Printed in Appendix.

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If they were to accept the inferences to be drawn from your statement they would turn out into the veldt thousands of men, women, and children whom it has been impossible to return to their farms immediately on the termination of the war, owing to the absence of sufficient transport and the scarcity of stock.

They have, however, already provided for the return of large numbers of the population of the camps which had been reduced from 116,000 at end of May to about 34,000 in the last week of October.

I observe that you are reported in the Press to have suggested in a speech at Paris that the British military authorities deliberately used the sufferings of women and children to induce their relatives in the field to lay down their arms, and in the Resolution passed at Vereeniging on 31st May the sufferings of the women and children were given as a reason for surrender.

No one deplores more than the British Government the high mortality in the camps during the epidemic of measles and pneumonia, but nothing was spared that money or science could afford to reduce it, and for the last six months the average total death rate in the camps has been about 21 per 1,000 per annum, a rate which must be much lower than any which obtained before the war in normal conditions.

It is, therefore, clear from the statistics that at the actual time of the surrender there could have been no cause for anxiety as to the condition of the women and children then in the British Camps, and in confirmation of this view I may remind you that neither at the time of your Conferences with Lord Kitchener in February, 1901, nor in the discussions which preceded the acceptance of the Terms of Surrender was any request made for special provision for widows and orphans.

On the contrary the request made on both these occasions was that the sums offered as a free grant by the British Government should be applied to the payment of notes and receipts for goods requisitioned by the Boer Commandoes, in many cases from persons of considerable means. To this proposal His Majesty's Government objected, and while willing that these notes and receipts should be accepted as evidence of war losses they stipulated that the grant should be applied for the benefit of the destitute, or in the words of the Terms of Surrender, " for the purpose of assisting the restoration of the people to their homes, and supplying those who, owing to war losses, are unable to provide themselves with food, shelter and the necessary amount of seed, stock, implements, &c., indispensable to the resumption of their normal occupation." As at present advised I believe that the sum allotted will be amply sufficient for the purpose but should more be required there is one source from which a substantial addition may be fairly expected.

His Majesty's Government are aware that large sums were remitted from the Transvaal to Europe during the war to be expended in the interests of the South African Republic.

They have no desire to question the expenditure of this money so far as it was legitimately devoted to the purposes for which it was intended, but they cannot doubt that a large balance still remains which would properly come to them as the successors of the late South African Republic, and which they would be prepared to add to the fund provided for the relief of the distressed burghers and their families. I venture to think that in this matter your wishes will coincide with mine, and that you will give me any assistance in your power to discover the persons to whom the money was intrusted, and to obtain from them a statement of account showing the expenditure and the amount of the balance which remains over.

I may add, with regard to the camps, that the reference in the Manifesto to the pecuniary assistance furnished by foreign sympathisers appears to rest on a misconception. It consisted in the Transvaal of 2,646 bales and packages chiefly containing clothing and miscellaneous stores, which were brought up from the coast at Military expense, and in the sum of £562 2s. 2d. received and distributed through the Burgher Relief Fund. I have not yet received exact information as to the money contributions to the camps in Orange River Colony, but it was on a similar scale, and provides no ground whatever for an unfavourable contrast with British liberality.

On the general question of your Appeal for help for the widows and orphans, the maimed and the needy, and for assistance in the education of the children, I desire

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on 31 October, 2019

to say that the Colonial Government is making itself entirely responsible for the maintenance of all destitute orphans, including their food, clothing, supervision, and education. Large orphanages are already in existence at Irene in the Transvaal, and Brandfort and Springfontein in the Orange River Colony; and suitable provision is also being made for widows.

The Government have been, and are, making themselves responsible for the education of the children. In the last year of the war £100,000 was spent on education in the Transvaal and £32,500 in the Orange River Colony. At the date of the signing of peace the number of children in Government schools in the Transvaal was 28,000, and in the Orange River Colony 14,500. As a contrast to these figures it may be mentioned that under the late Governments the total number of children being educated never exceeded 15,000 and 9,000, in the South African Republic and Orange Free State respectively.

With regard to your statements as to the desolation caused by the war, I would point out that it was inevitable that much damage should be caused in consequence of the prolongation of hostilities long after there had ceased to be any reasonable doubt as to the issue of the war. Although the principal centres, such as Bloemfontein, Kroonstad, Winburg, Heilbron, Harrismith, Bethlehem, Ficksburg, Ladybrand, Thaba N'chu, Bethulie, Fauresmith, Jagersfontein, Koffyfontein, Boshof, in the Orange River Colony, and Johannesburg, Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Klerksdorp, Heidelberg, Standerton, Middelburg, Lydenburg, Pietersburg, Nylstroom, Lichtenburg, Zeerust, Rustenburg, in the Transvaal are practically untouched, it is no doubt the case that a large number of farm houses and buildings have been damaged or destroyed by one or other of the belligerents or by natives. The value of such buildings in South Africa is, however, in most instances not very great, and the pecuniary loss is probably more than compensated by the increased value of the land. The heaviest loss, and that temporarily pressing most hardly on the people is, no doubt, the loss of their stock, but the statement that every living animal was taken away or killed is a great exaggeration. A recent Census taken in the Orange River Colony shows that, excluding animals belonging to the military and Repatriation Department, there are now in the Colony over 120,000 head of cattle, 700,000 sheep and goats, and 27,000 horses. Similar figures for the Transvaal are not yet available, but the local Government is spending very large sums to supply stock in both Colonies. The Repatriation Department in the Transvaal is using 36,000 animals for transport alone. It has already issued some 20,000 head of stock to the farmers, and is in a position to issue another 35,000 by 1st December. Assistance is being given in the Orange River Colony on a like scale, and ploughs and implements are being supplied as far as it is possible. So far, indeed, from being a desert the country will, if rain is abundant, be extensively cultivated at the end of the year; and it is the earnest hope of His Majesty's Government that the strenuous efforts now being made by the local Governments, seconded by the co-operation of the people themselves, will result in bringing back a degree of prosperity in no way inferior to that existing before the war.

I am, &c.,
J. CHAMBERLAIN.

No. 2.

GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA to MR. CHAMBERLAIN.

(Received November 13, 1902.)

SIR, Horrex's Hotel, Norfolk Street, Strand, W.C., November 12, 1902.

IN fulfilment of the promise made in my letter of the 7th instant,* wherein I acknowledge the receipt of your communication† of the 6th instant, I now have the honour to reply more in detail to some of the subjects touched upon in the latter.

I sincerely share your desire to avoid controversy, the more so as there were some assurances in your recent speech in the House of Commons—which I was privileged to

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* Not printed. † No. 1.

hear—of a kind to gratify all who have the fortunes of my destitute fellow-countrymen and women at heart.

May I also say that my colleagues and I welcome your decision to visit South Africa, and your determination to see the condition of our country with your own eyes and form a first-hand judgment upon its needs.

Meanwhile there are some misunderstandings as to the reasons which led us to appeal to the world on behalf of our fellow-countrymen which I must try to remove. In so doing I would avoid, as far as I can, all matters of controversy.

We made no secret, in accepting the terms of surrender, that the compensation or assistance therein promised would be totally inadequate to enable the burghers of the late Republics who remained in the field or were in the prisons and Concentration Camps to make a fair start in life again. On the contrary it was made clear by us that in the absence of further help from the British Government we would have at once to appeal to the charity of the civilized world for further help for the widows and orphans of our burghers and for those who had been rendered unfit for work by wounds or sickness during the war. When I touched upon this matter during the interview which, with my two colleagues, Generals De Wet and De la Rey, I had the honour to have with you on the 5th September last, and suggested "something might be done with regard to the widows and orphans" (Blue Book, Cd. 1284, 1902, page 23), you replied, "Well, I think we had better not enter upon discussion in detail upon points of that kind," and after reminding me that you had already undertaken many obligations, you pointed to the treatment of widows and orphans of men who fought, and of the wounded on the Southern side in the American Civil War, as a precedent showing that there was no obligation to give help in such cases. You remarked that you had already contributed "a very large sum to relieve those who are really destitute in our new Colonies," and added: "We have done all that we can afford to do, and I think it would be undesirable that the Generals should press us any further in the matter now or in writing." I do not see what stronger proof there could be of the accuracy of our assertion in the appeal to which you take exception, that we "have not, up to the present, succeeded in inducing the British Government to grant further assistance" to our people. Had we at that time received the assurance that the Government would undertake full responsibility for the maintenance of widows, orphans and the destitute, our appeal would never have been issued in its present form.

It was only from your speech of November 5th that we learnt that the grant was intended entirely for all who are destitute, or who cannot make a fresh start in life without help. We always understood that the three millions were to be given in partial compensation for war losses, and that that was also understood by Lord Milner is clear from his despatch of June 11th (published in Blue Book, Cd. 1163, page 141), in which he expresses his intention of distributing it *pro rata* to those who can prove losses through the war.

It therefore appeared to us that the free grant made no general provision for widows, orphans and the destitute except in so far as they could prove war losses, and we distinctly gathered from your remarks above quoted that you could do no more for them. Under these circumstances we issued our appeal. We were, I need not say, highly gratified to learn from your recent speech that the Government would undertake a fuller responsibility for those needing their help, and particularly for the information that if more money than has been voted should be needed, the loan would be increased accordingly. We feel sure that it will ultimately be found that the three million pounds already assigned will by no means suffice to meet what is required as a free gift. Meanwhile, the needs of the sufferers are pressing, and we are glad to think that the sums which, through the generosity of the public, we have been able to collect, will to some extent minister to them without any delay, while they will also supplement what is being done by the Government.

In regard to the loan, the provision lately made and the promise that the amount would be augmented if necessary, came as a great relief after the months of waiting and suspense, when we were continually being told of those who, from lack of timely assistance, were compelled to part with their property to meet the urgent wants of themselves and their families. Some further and more detailed information as to the terms and conditions under which loans will be obtainable would be gratefully welcomed by the people interested.

With regard to your reference to the free grant of three millions as something "without any precedent in the history of the world," I wish to say nothing that can excite or prolong controversy. You must only allow me to remark that the whole circumstances are unprecedented; that the gift of three millions was one of the conditions upon which the burghers laid down their arms, and that our view is, that having taken the assets of our Governments, you may fairly be expected to meet their liabilities, not in part, but in full.

In regard to the large sums of money alleged by you to remain unexpended in Europe out of sums remitted by the Transvaal to Europe during the war, I can only assure you that I have no knowledge of any such remittances, and should be surprised to find that any were made. There is no sum of money belonging to the late Government known to me over which I have any authority whatever. I can only say that should any such sums exist I personally should be very glad to see them devoted to the objects mentioned.

I am afraid that my reference to the maintenance of the Concentration Camps in my article has suggested to you that I do not sufficiently appreciate the benefits which many poor people have enjoyed of being allowed to stay on in the camps while still unable to provide for the wants of themselves and their families. It was not my intention to suggest that the camps ought to be broken up before the people can be brought home to their farms. What I had in mind was the fate of those who were anxious to leave the camps and were possessed of sufficient means to do so, and also of men who, not being in the camps themselves, were anxious to get their families out to their farms and could not get the permit to do so. Of these I could give you many instances with full particulars if you desire it, and would beg you to make enquiries into the matter. I was glad to be assured by your speech that it was not your intention that any people should be detained in the camps who could provide for themselves, or who had relations able to provide for them outside.

In regard to your other remarks concerning the Concentration Camps I do not wish to enter into a controversy which would only revive a most painful memory. All that I said on that subject was based on reports officially published by the British Government. I recognise that towards the close of the war improvements were introduced into them in consequence of which the death-rate fell to an ordinary figure, but I do not know on what grounds you assert that a death-rate of 21 per 1,000 is lower than that which obtained before the war in normal conditions, and I am not prepared to agree that that is the case.

My remark at Paris about the sufferings of the women and children, which you quote, has reference more particularly to those remaining outside the camps, who had their dwellings with the furniture, food, and all that they contained burnt or destroyed by British troops; their herds killed or removed, and themselves left destitute on the veld. These were certainly sufferings. They certainly did, as stated in our Vereeniging resolution, carry great weight with us among other reasons in inducing us to surrender. If this was not their object, what purpose were they intended to serve?

We recognise that the Government is making great efforts to carry on the work of education in the camps. But I am sure you will understand the feeling general among my countrymen that our children's education should not be such as might tend to make them forget their mother tongue—the language of their home and their Church. I must be allowed to add that the educational advantages of children under the former Governments were, perhaps, greater than is generally supposed in this country—greater certainly than in many older and richer countries in Europe.

I fully appreciate the work that is being done for orphans as a mark of the good intentions of the Government. But I cannot help sharing with my colleagues many objections to the large orphanages of which you speak. It seems to us preferable, and far more natural, that orphans should, as far as possible, be brought up among their own kith and kin, and that the aid intended for them should be expended through relations and friends who take charge of them.

You have, I regret to find, been misinformed as to the pecuniary and other assistance granted to our people in their misfortunes by "foreign sympathisers." It would savour of base ingratitude on my part for the great assistance rendered by them if I did not try and remove the wrong impression you labour under. I have not at hand even an approximate statement of the amounts in money and of the value in clothing

and other necessaries and comforts supplied to the prisoners, the poor, and the wounded, and others requiring help on our side, by "foreign sympathisers." That in cash and in kind they totalled a value more than a hundred-fold what you have been led to suppose I have not the least hesitation in averring.

On the subject of the desolation caused by the war it may probably be needless to repeat here what I have said elsewhere. You are about to proceed to South Africa yourself, and if—as I have no reason to doubt will be the case—you get some of our own people to go over the country of the late Republics with you, you will be able to judge for yourself whether the description of the ruin and desolation as given by myself and others of us was—nay, I might almost say, if it could be—exaggerated. I note that only in a telegram of a few days ago it is stated by a correspondent of the "Standard," a paper which will not be accused of overmuch sympathy with our cause, that Lord Milner himself had stated in an interview that in the very districts of which I generally speak from personal knowledge, "the people have lost everything except the land," and, again, "the need of immediate assistance is more apparent in this district than in other places, owing to the loss of all the farmers' stock." No doubt, when Lord Milner extends his investigations, he will find that these observations will apply as a general rule, and that the exceptions are comparatively few.

The devastation is not by any means confined to the open country. I can mention from my personal knowledge the following towns and villages in the South-Eastern Transvaal alone, which have been utterly destroyed: Ermelo, Bethel, Carolina, Amsterdam, Amersfort, Piet Retief, Paul Pietersdorp, Dullstroom, Roossenekal. In the Western Transvaal General De la Rey informs me of the following places which have met with a similar fate: Bloemhof, Schweizer Reinecke, Hartbeestfontein, Geysdorp, Wolmaransstad. In the Orange River Colony, Vredefort, Villiers, Parys, Lindley, Bothaville, Ventersburg, and Reitz, have been wholly, and Vrede partially, destroyed.

I cannot agree that all the places mentioned by you are "practically untouched." For example, parts of both Lichtenburg, and Lydenburg have been destroyed, and it has been brought to my notice that in many of the places you mention the contents of a considerable number of houses have been considerably damaged, and in many cases wholly destroyed. If your allusion to "one or other of the belligerents" is meant to suggest that the destruction of houses was practised by us you have been misinformed. My orders were definite that no houses should be destroyed; I know of only four cases where the orders were contravened, and in those instances every endeavour was made to trace the perpetrators, and where known they were promptly punished.

As to the increase in the selling value of land to which you refer, I have no definite information before me to show whether it has occurred, or, if so, whether it has been maintained. If there be such an increase it can only affect those desiring to sell. To the owner anxious to retain his land and live on its produce it is a very poor compensation for the loss of his buildings and stock.

It would be interesting to ascertain what proportion of the cattle, sheep and horses in the Orange Colony at the time of the census which you mention had been brought into it since the surrender, but even the figures as given would, to anyone who knew that country before the war, convey some notion of the fearful loss during it, and be convincing as to the truth of the statement that large tracts—the greater portion of the country in fact—were completely denuded of every living animal on them.

I regret to have to dwell on these points, and have done so only to remove misunderstandings as to the grounds for our appeal for aid. I do not doubt your desire to restore peace and the elements of prosperity to our unhappy country, and I would wish that we might so far as possible avoid controversy as to the past, and address ourselves entirely to the necessities of the present.

I have, &c.,
LOUIS BOTHA.

To the Right Honourable
Joseph Chamberlain, M.P.,
Secretary of State for the Colonies.

No. 3.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN to GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA.

SIR, Downing Street, November 15, 1902.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th of November,* in reply to my comments on statements contained in the "Appeal of the Boer Generals to the Civilized World," and in their speeches on the Continent.

I appreciate the spirit of the last paragraph of your letter, and share the wish which you express therein, and in view of my approaching visit to South Africa I will not prolong the present correspondence.

I trust that during my tour I may gain much valuable information which will assist His Majesty's Government in their efforts to restore peace and prosperity to the countries which have suffered by the war.

I have, &c.,
J. CHAMBERLAIN.

No.4.

GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA to MR. CHAMBERLAIN

(Received November 18, 1902.)

SIR, Horrex's Hotel, Strand, November 18, 1902.

I HAVE to thank you for your letter of 15th instant,† and wish only to say, in reply, that I cordially join in the hope that your visit to South Africa may be a step towards that restoration of peace and prosperity to our desolate country which I am sure that it is your desire to promote.

I have, &c.,
LOUIS BOTHA.

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* No. 2. † No. 3.

APPENDIX.

"NIEUWE ROTTERDAMSCHE COURANT," 25th September.

Appeal of the Boer Generals to the Civilised World.

(Translation.)

It will be fresh in the recollection of the World how, after an anxious struggle for their independence, lasting more than two and a half years, the Boers were at last obliged to accept the terms of surrender placed before them through the intermedium of their delegates at Vereeninging by the Government of His Britannic Majesty King Edward the Seventh.

At the same time we were deputed by these Representatives to proceed to England in order, in the first place, to make an appeal to our new Government to alleviate the awful distress which exists throughout the length and breadth of the new Colonies. Should we not be successful in this, then we were to make an appeal to the Civilised World's humanity for charitable contributions.

As we have up to the present not succeeded in inducing the British Government to grant further assistance to our people, and as the needs are indescribably great, no other course is open to us but to apply to the peoples of Europe and America.

During the critical days of struggle it was sweet to us and ours to receive continually marks of sympathy from all quarters. The financial and other aids for our wives and our children in the Concentration Camps and for the prisoners of war in all parts of the World contributed immeasurably to lighten the lot of these unhappy ones; and we take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks, in the name of the people of the late Republics, to all those who have so charitably assisted in the past. The small Boer people can never forget the help extended to them in the dark hour of their trial.

The people of the two Republics were prepared to sacrifice everything for their independence; and now that the struggle is over they stand totally ruined. Although we have not had the opportunity of making up an exact statement of the devastation brought about in the two Republics, we are convinced from personal knowledge that during the war at least thirty thousand houses on the Boer farms, and, further, a number of villages, were burned or destroyed by the British.

Our dwellings, with the furniture, have been burned or destroyed, our orchards felled, all agricultural implements broken up, mills destroyed, every living animal driven off or killed—nothing, alas! was left to us. The land is a desert. Besides, the war has claimed many victims, and the land resounds with the weeping of helpless widows and orphans.

Moreover, we need not remind you of how much will be necessary in future for the education of the children of our Burghers.

In this great distress we now turn to the World with our appeal to help, with charitable contributions, our widows and orphans, our maimed and destitute, and to have our children properly educated.

We point to the terrible consequences of the war in order to bring our great needs to the knowledge of the World, and in no wise for the purpose of stirring up feeling again. The sword now rests in its scabbard, and all disputes are silent in the presence of such great misery.

The damage caused by the war is indescribably great, so that the small amount which England will contribute, according to the terms of surrender, would, even if multiplied tenfold, be totally insufficient to cover even the war losses.

The widows and orphans, the maimed and destitute, and our children, for whom alone we make this appeal, will, therefore, receive little, and in the most cases nothing, from this source.

All contributions will be placed to a fund to be called " The General Boer Relief Fund "; and this fund will be used exclusively now, and in the future, for the needs of those persons for whom it is collected.

We kindly request the cordial co-operation of the existing Committees in the various countries of Europe and America; and we are now on the point of visiting these countries successively in order to organize this matter properly.

LOUIS BOTHA.
C. R. DE WET.
J. H. DE LA REY.

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on 31 October, 2019

SOUTH AFRICA.

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE

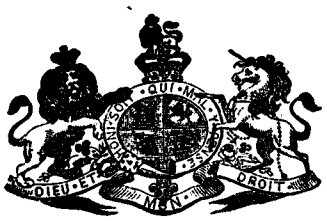
RELATING TO

AFFAIRS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

(*In continuation of* Cd. 1163.)

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

February, 1903.



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